

Putting the Year Back in School Year: Year-Round Education¹

This IPRO report examines the costs and benefits of operating schools on year-round calendars as opposed to traditional calendars.

Definitions

Year-Round Education (YRE): a form of schooling in which the traditional three month summer break is broken into shorter breaks implemented throughout the school year. One of the most common forms of YRE is the 45/15 schedule, whereby the school operates for 45 days, followed by a 15 day break, followed by another 45 days, and so on. Other “in-session/out-of-session” schedules are the 60/20 and the 90/30. This system is different from “extended year” programs, which add extra instruction days to the calendar.

- *Single-track schedule*: a YRE schedule in which the entire school is in session and on break at the same time.
- *Multi-track schedule*: a YRE schedule where students and teachers are divided into tracks that run on staggered calendars within the in-session/out-of-session system. There is always one track on break. Under the 45/15 schedule there is one track going on break and another coming back from break every 15 days.

Summer learning loss: the phenomenon whereby students forget previous learning during traditional summer breaks, causing regression in academic performance.²

At-risk students: students identified as having a greater chance of academic underperformance because of factors such as socioeconomic status, limited English language proficiency, or disability.

Overview

Schools have recently experienced increased federal pressure to raise student achievement (e.g. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act, No Child Left Behind). Year-round education (YRE) has been discussed as one of many ways to boost test scores because of the detriment that summer learning loss has on student achievement.³ The National Association of Year-Round Education reports that in the 2006-2007 school year about three percent of public schools were YRE schools, accounting for about four percent of the public student population.^{4, 5, 6} According to the Iowa Department of Education, Iowa operated five public

¹ This IPRO report was prepared by University of Iowa undergraduate students Sarah Claypool (sarah-claypool@uiowa.edu) and Liz Schorsch (elizabethschorsch@uiowa.edu).

² Bents, Gerd J. “Examining the Effects of Year-Round Education.” MA research paper. University of Wisconsin – Stout, Aug. 2002.

³ Cooper, Harris, et al. “The Effects of Summer Vacation on Achievement Test Scores: A Narrative and Meta-Analytic Review.” *Review of Educational Research* 66.3 (1996): 227-268.

⁴ “Statistical Summaries of Year-Round Education Programs: 2006-2007.” National Association of Year-Round Education. Web. 10 Sept. 2011.
<<http://www.nayre.org/STATISTICAL%20SUMMARIES%20OF%20YRE%202007.pdf>>.

schools during the 2010-2011 school year. One of these schools was in Indianola, and the other four were in Des Moines.⁷

Costs and Benefits of Year-Round Education

Costs

- Unclear gains for the average student body: Research on the academic benefits of YRE for overall student populations is mostly inconclusive. Several studies, examining different schools and achievement tests, have found no statistically significant difference between the scores of YRE students and the scores of traditional calendar students.^{8, 9, 10, 11}
- Single-track, higher costs per pupil: Single-track YRE schools cost just as much or more to operate than traditional schedule schools. A study conducted by the University of Louisville found that a one-point gain in reading achievement on a comprehensive basic skills test cost eight dollars more per pupil and a one-point gain in math achievement on the same test cost \$14 more per pupil under YRE than under traditional calendar schooling.¹² With these figures, a one-point test score gain in reading for every student in Iowa would cost nearly \$4 million under YRE, and a one-point test score gain in math for every student would cost nearly \$7 million.¹³ Estimates of increased costs do not apply to multi-track YRE schools.
- Teen summer unemployment: The teen employment rate has declined steeply over the last 20 years and hit a historic low of 31 percent for ages 16-19 in 2010. Unemployment is greater for students enrolled in school during the traditional three-month summer. In summer 2009, 41 percent of non-enrolled youths had jobs compared to 26 percent of youths enrolled in school.¹⁴

⁵ “Fast Facts: How many educational institutions exist in the United States.” National Center for Education Statistics. Web. 23 Sept. 2011. <<http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=84>>.

⁶ “Fast Facts: What are the enrollment trends in public and private elementary and secondary schools.” National Center for Education Statistics. Web. 23 Sept. 2011. <<http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=65>>.

⁷ The Indianola school was Irving, and the Des Moines schools were Capitol View Elementary, Downtown School, Moulton, and River Woods Elementary Lundy, Betsy. “Year round schools.” Message to the author. 18 Oct. 2011. E-mail.

⁸ Meier, Malinda R. “Exploring the Effects of School Calendars on Academic Achievement.” Diss. Lindenwood University, 2009.

⁹ Bents, Gerd J. “Examining the Effects of Year-Round Education.” MA research paper. University of Wisconsin – Stout, Aug. 2002.

¹⁰ McMillen, Bradley J. “A Statewide Evaluation of Academic Achievement in Year-Round Schools.” *The Journal of Educational Research* 95.2 (2001) : 67-74.

¹¹ Dossett, Denn; Munoz, Marco. “Year-Round Education in a Reform Environment: The Impact on Student Achievement and Cost-Effectiveness Analysis.” Research report. University of Louisville, 6 July 2000.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ These figures were calculated by multiplying each of the \$8 and \$14 figures by Iowa’s total 2010-2011 public school enrollment, 495,897. “2010-2011 Iowa Public School District PreK-12 Enrollments By District, Grade, Race And Gender.” Iowa Department of Education. Web. Oct. 12 2011. <http://educateiowa.gov/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&gid=391&Itemid=1563>.

¹⁴ Morisi, Teresa L. “The early 2000s: A period of declining teen summer employment rates.” *Monthly Labor Review*, May 2010. Web. 25 Sept. 2011. <<http://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2010/05/art2full.pdf>>.

Benefits

- Academic gains for low-income students: On average, low-income students on traditional calendars experience greater summer learning loss than their peers, and YRE schools have been shown to lessen this gap. One study, “The Effects of Modified School Calendars on Academic Achievement...” found that low-income students on YRE calendars outperformed low-income students on traditional calendars.¹⁵
- Regular remediation opportunities: YRE’s shorter breaks can be used for optional remediation, so that students who fall behind or need extra help do not have to wait until summer school to get it. Under YRE, students can receive academic assistance at intervals throughout the year to keep them caught up with the material at hand.¹⁶
- Multi-track, cheaply combating overcrowding: Multi-track schools can accommodate between 20-33 percent more students than traditional calendar schools with fewer costs.¹⁷ One study, titled “Efficiency and Costs in Education” Year-Round Versus Traditional Schools,” found that multi-track YRE schools compared to traditional schools experienced eight percent fewer total costs, about \$400 per pupil. This included a 31 percent reduction in the per pupil cost of real estate capital.¹⁸
- Fighting teacher burnout: Some YRE teachers note that the systematic breaks throughout the year allow for recuperation and professional reflection, which can contribute to more effective lesson planning and adjustments to fit students’ learning needs throughout the year.¹⁹

Case Studies

Chicago: An At-risk Academic Issue^{20, 21}

Chicago Public Schools (CPS) began operating YRE schools in 2008 under the Track E calendar. Track E is a single-track YRE system running on the 45/15 calendar. It is comprised of the same number of instructional days as Chicago’s traditional calendar schools. Since 2008, CPS has increased the number of Track E schools each year, and CPS officials have expressed a desire to make all Chicago public schools YRE schools.

According to CPS, schools have switched to Track E in order to alleviate summer learning loss, provide students with a safe environment throughout the year, and improve student

¹⁵ This learning loss mostly appears in the area of reading comprehension. Cooper et al. “The Effects of Modified School Calendars on Student Achievement and on School and Community Attitudes.” *The Review of Educational Research* 73.1 (2003): 1-52.

¹⁶ Ballinger, Charles. “Prisoners No More.” *Educational Leadership* Nov. 1995: 28-31.

¹⁷ “Year-Round Education Program Guide.” California Department of Education. Web. Sept. 10 2011. <<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/fa/yr/guide.asp>>.

¹⁸ Daneshvary, Nasser; Clauretie, Terrence M. “Efficiency and costs in education: year-round versus traditional schedules.” *Economics of Education Review* 20 (2001): 279-287.

¹⁹ Gismondi Haser, Shelly; Nasser, Ilham. Teacher Job Satisfaction in a Year-Round School.” *Educational Leadership* 60.8 (2003): 65-67; “Track E Schools Take Off.” *Chicago Catalyst*. Nov. 2009. <<http://news.medill.northwestern.edu/chicago/news.aspx?id=170383>>.

²⁰ Rice, Allie. “Chicago Public Schools Expand year-round schools.” *Medill Reports Chicago*. 14 Oct. 2010. Web. 15 Sept. 2011.

²¹ “Track E Schools Take Off.” *Chicago Catalyst*. Nov. 2009. <<http://news.medill.northwestern.edu/chicago/news.aspx?id=170383>>.

and staff attendance. The majority of Track E schools are those serving large percentages of at-risk students, especially those of low socioeconomic status. Only a small number of CPS schools utilize YRE scheduling to alleviate overcrowding.

One of the main complaints against Track E schools is their lack of air conditioning, especially with classes in session during most of August. The Chicago Board of Education vetoed a request by Chicago Teachers Union to require all year-round schools to have air conditioning.

Data

- As of the 2011-2012 school year, CPS operates 247 YRE schools under its Track E calendar, or 36 percent of its schools.²²
- The number of CPS Track E schools has increased 602 percent since 2008.
- In 2008-2009, Track E schools posted higher achievement gains (six percent) than the district (three percent). Since most schools switch to a Track E calendar because of high at-risk student populations and academic underperformance, Track E schools continue to post lower test scores than the district. However, this achievement gap has closed slightly since Track E's implementation in 2008.

*California: An Overcrowding Issue*²³

California has the greatest number of year-round schools of any state. The state awards incentive grants to school districts planning and operating year-round multi-track programs.

Most YRE schools in California use the 60/20 schedule, in which students attend school for 60 days and then have a 20-day vacation period. This schedule allows schools to accommodate up to 33 percent more students. Some California schools also operate 45/15 or 90/30 schedules, which also provide a 33 percent maximum capacity gain for schools. These schedules do not affect the number of instructional days per year, which remains at 180 days for each schedule.

The state began its Year-Round School Grant program, which encouraged school districts to change to multi-track year-round calendars, in the 1990s in response to rapid student population growth and overcrowding in many districts. Year-round multi-track schools were viewed as a cost-effective approach for reducing class sizes while possibly boosting student achievement.

²² Figure calculated by using the total number of 2011-2012 CPS schools, 682. "20th Day Enrollment." Chicago Public Schools Office of Performance. Web. 23 Oct. 2011.

< <http://research.cps.k12.il.us/cps/accountweb/Reports/allschools.html>>.

²³ "Year-Round Education Program Guide." California Department of Education. Web. 10 Sept. 2011.

<<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/fa/yr/guide.asp>>.

Data

- As of the 2007-2008 school year about 12 percent of California's public schools used year-round calendars. Of these year-round schools, 37 percent used a multi-track schedule with a total student enrollment of 442,201, representing seven percent of public students. Sixty-three percent of YRE schools used single-track schedules with a total enrollment of 467,144, representing another seven percent of public students.²⁴
- The most widely used year-round schedule is the 60/20, in which students attend school for 60 days then have a 20-day vacation period. This schedule allows schools to accommodate up to 33 percent more students. Some California schools also operate 45/15 or 90/30 schedules, which also provide a 33 percent maximum capacity gain for schools. These schedules do not affect the number of instructional days per year, which remains at 180 days for each schedule.
- A recent study examined whether year-round schooling in California affected scores and growth in schools' Academic Performance Index (API), which is derived from standardized academic tests.²⁵ Results showed that year-round schooling had no effect on API performance across a five-year period (2000-2005). API scores and growth rate in API performance did not differ between year-round and traditional calendar schools.

This report was prepared in October 2011 by the Iowa Policy Research Organization (IPRO), a non-partisan public policy undergraduate group at the University of Iowa. For additional research on this or other issues, please visit our website at <http://www.uiowa.edu/~ipro/> or contact rene-rocha@uiowa.edu

²⁴ "2007-2008 Year-Round Education Statistics." California Department of Education. Web. 23 Oct. 2011. <<http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/fa/yr/stats0708.asp>>.

²⁵ Wu, Amery D.; Stone, Jake E. "Does Year-Round Schooling Affect the Outcome and Growth of California's API scores?" *Journal of Educational Research and Policy Studies*, Spring 2010. Web. 23 Sept. 2011. <<http://normes.uark.edu/erps/V10N1.pdf#page=81>>.